

SOUTH DAKOTA BOARD OF SOCIAL SERVICES

Approved Meeting Minutes

April 16, 2024

Kneip Building, 1st Floor, DSS Conference Room

700 Governors Drive, Pierre, SD 57501

Board Members Present: Elton Blemaster, Sandy Diegel, Howard Girnager, Karen Michels, and Stacy Tieszen.

Board Members Absent: Colleen Winter

Others Present: Matt Althoff, Department of Social Services (DSS) Cabinet Secretary; Brenda Tidball-Zeltinger, Deputy Secretary and Chief of Operations; Heather Petermann, Division Director Medical Services; Pamela Bennett, Director Child Protection Services; Tiffany Wolfgang, Chief of Behavioral Health; David Gall, Energy Assistance Program Administrator; Carrie Johnson, Director of Economic Assistance; Amanda Doherty-Karber, Assistant Director; and Jeremy Johnson, Human Services Center Administrator.

Welcome: Secretary Althoff welcomed the board and explained that Board Chair Winter was unable to attend due to illness. He asked the group if they would like to proceed with him acting as chair. The board agreed that Althoff would chair.

Medicaid: Heather Petermann the Director for South Dakota Medicaid was introduced to the board. Petermann gave an update on Medicaid Expansion and the Pregnancy Program. She stated that as of the end of February there were 21,562 people enrolled under the new expansion coverage group. There have been 855,020 claims processed to date. And for the expansion population, nearly \$125 million toward medical services have been paid SFY24. She also noted that 93% of the Medicaid Expansion recipients have had a claim paid.

Petermann next spoke on the Medicaid Pregnancy Program. The program is intended to improve maternal health outcomes through enhanced care and coordination, services being provided with standards of care, and reducing barriers to care. Its objectives are to increase utilization of prenatal and postpartum care, provide and connect pregnant and postpartum with supports, and improve health outcomes for pregnant women and their babies. Petermann explained that the coverage compliments coverage changes for pregnant women that occurred July 1, 2023. Over 30 clinics and 112 provides to date have indicated they wish to participate in the program with provider enrollment ongoing. Newly-pregnant women identified at the time of enrollment are invited to select a participating provider. The program will continue engaging with stakeholder and will have a marketing group outreach to new moms in understanding barriers to care.

Child Protection: Pamela Bennett, Director of Child Protection Services, gave a briefing on the Family First Prevention Services Act: Prevention Planning. Bennett explained that the main objective of FFPS is to reduce the number of entries into foster while increasing the number of children and you who can remain safely in their homes. Under the FFPS, Title IV-E federal funds can be used to address substance use, parenting education, and mental health. Bennett explained that those served will be caregivers with limited parental capacity to meet basic needs with the goal of the parents retaining custody of their children. Referrals will be made by a wide array of providers, the providers will screen applicants and complete assessments. Evidence-based programs will be provided, services are for up to one-year, but can be renewed. Grinager asked if we have adequate resources and people to implement this? Bennett explained that we do not provide the direct service, we will be using the partner providers.

Child Care: Amanda Doherty-Karber presented on Child Care Updates. The Child Care State Plan is required every three years. It covers Child Care Assistance Program, Licensing, and Quality. Input and consultations for the plan come from local governments, State Advisory Council, tribal partners, and public input. The plan period is from October 1, 2024, through September 30, 2026. Impacting SD are child care assistance will be provider prospective payments instead of reimbursements. This will happen with the implementation of the BEES Child Care module. Another update the Child Care module will help achieve is the payment of child care providers at the state's rate instead of the caps payment at the child care provider's declared public rate.

Information was given on full implementation of federal criminal background checks requirements. Anticipating implementation challenges with these federal requirements, states have been able to allow staff to begin work under supervision with certain initial screening completed pending the fingerprint background check results. That federal flexibility is no longer available and no later than October 1, DSS must fully implement the federal requirement and ensure fingerprint background checks are completed pre-employment. DSS has been actively working with the Division of Criminal Investigation (DCI) to deploy digital fingerprint scanners at various DSS offices and within larger child care centers to expedite the turn around time for this process. Blemaster commented that the digital fingerprint is full proof.

Economic Assistance: Carrie Johnson, Director of Economic Assistance, spoke on the new Benefits Eligibility and Enrollment System (BEES) which launched on March 4. The new system includes functionality for both DSS staff and customers. Processes are streamlined enhancing the user experience. Initially the system is limited to eligibility for Medicaid programs. Development is in the works for SNAP, TANF, Child Care Assistance, and Energy Assistance. The mobile friendly customer portal allows applicants and enrollees; apply, report changes, complete renewals, check coverage, view notices, select communication preference, request appeals, and find contact information. Johnson reflected that she was very proud of staff because even with all the changes no processing delays were experienced. She concluded that they would continue to be there for people who need the extra help. Althoff commented that for the customers you could compare the system to moving from doing your taxes on paper to using tax software.

David Gall, Energy Assistance Program Manager, gave a brief update on the Weatherization Assistance Program. Gall explained that it is a 100% federally funded program that makes homes safer and more energy efficient through the installation of cost-effective measures. To qualify income should be below 200% below the Federal Poverty Level. Priority is given to households with elderly, disabled, or children under the age of 19. In SFY 2023, 215 homes in 94 communities across the state were weatherized at an average cost of \$13,222. The funding amount for SFY 2024 has yet to be announced. In addition to weatherization measures, health and safety of occupants is also considered though the testing of heating system and appliance for combustion safety, testing for carbon monoxide leaks, monitoring for possible moisture damage or mold infestations, checking electrical panels and wiring for safety, replacing and/or providing tune-ups for unsafe heating systems, and installing smoke and carbon monoxide detectors. Johnson noted this program really gives you a lot of bang for your buck.

Feature Program — HSC: Jeremy Johnson, Human Services Center Administrator, presented on the purpose and work of HSC. The goal of HSC is to help provide services to those who haven't found success elsewhere. Services provided include adult and adolescent inpatient psychiatric treatment, adult inpatient substance use disorder treatment, licensed nursing facility, and court-ordered competency restoration. Johnson reported that in FY23 HSC total episodes of service was 1,189. Althoff asked how many are unique bodies? Johnson responded that the 1,189 include people who use multiple services. Johnson also spoke about HSC's strategic goal to strengthen and support a qualified workforce and the goal to ensure a safe, therapeutic environment for all. HSC has used recruitment incentives, shift differentials and self-scheduling in helping to meet the workforce goals. Althoff asked how many staff – not FTE does HSC employ? Johnson believed it to be around 470. Johnson also provided examples of the renovations to the patient care areas that were completed to help meet the safe and therapeutic environment goal. Tieszen asked the average

length of stay. Johnson responded that adult acute is around 14 days, nursing home or psych rehab is longer. Tieszen also asked about the overall capacity of the facility. Johnson said it is what we can safely staff and meet the demands. Tiffany Wolfgang, Chief of Behavioral Health, introduced herself and spoke to her role. She explained in crisis services we are thoughtful that people have services close to their home environment. With Governor Noem's support South Dakotans now have 33 additional beds dispersed regionally that are available to serve persons experiencing a mental health crisis who are in need of short-term assistance.

2024 Legislative Session: Althoff gave a legislative update and explained that Medicaid Expansion will be at the ballot box for clarification over whether voters intended for Expansion to include a work requirement as part of eligibility. He noted that currently the Department administers multiple programs that have a work requirement. Knowledge gained through these other programs has informed the Department how these can be administered effectively. Questions from Council members were addressed through the presentation.

Althoff continued that the 2024 Session also led to the the creation of the Indian Child Advisory Council at on which he will represent the Department of Social Services. Council membership also includes representatives from the legislature, SD's nine tribes, and other child welfare experts.

Tidball- Zeltinger provided an update on the legislation that was passed regarding interstate licensing compacts. She explained the point of the compacts is to remove barriers in licensing across multiple states. The psychology compact, PSYSPACT is the furthest along of the compacts and plans to accept SD applicants as soon as July.

Wolfgang spoke to workforce development in Behavioral Health and the landscape analysis.

Public Comment: No public comment. Arielle Zionts with KFF Health News asked a question that Althoff said he could follow up with her after the meeting.

Next Meeting Day: The next meeting was set for October 15, 2024, at 1:30 p.m.

Adjourn: Meeting adjourned at 3:58 p.m.